

The Sinking of the SS Oranjestad

Dedicated to the Brave Men of the SS Oranjestad



Pa. Roland W. Peterson

As I stood there in silence my thoughts drifted away
There it lay on the ground, still braced by the straps of the crane
that had just lifted it out of the water
An elderly lady touched the propeller with her hands
I felt as if she had been waiting for this moment a long time
There were tears in her eyes.

She murmured something that
I could not understand

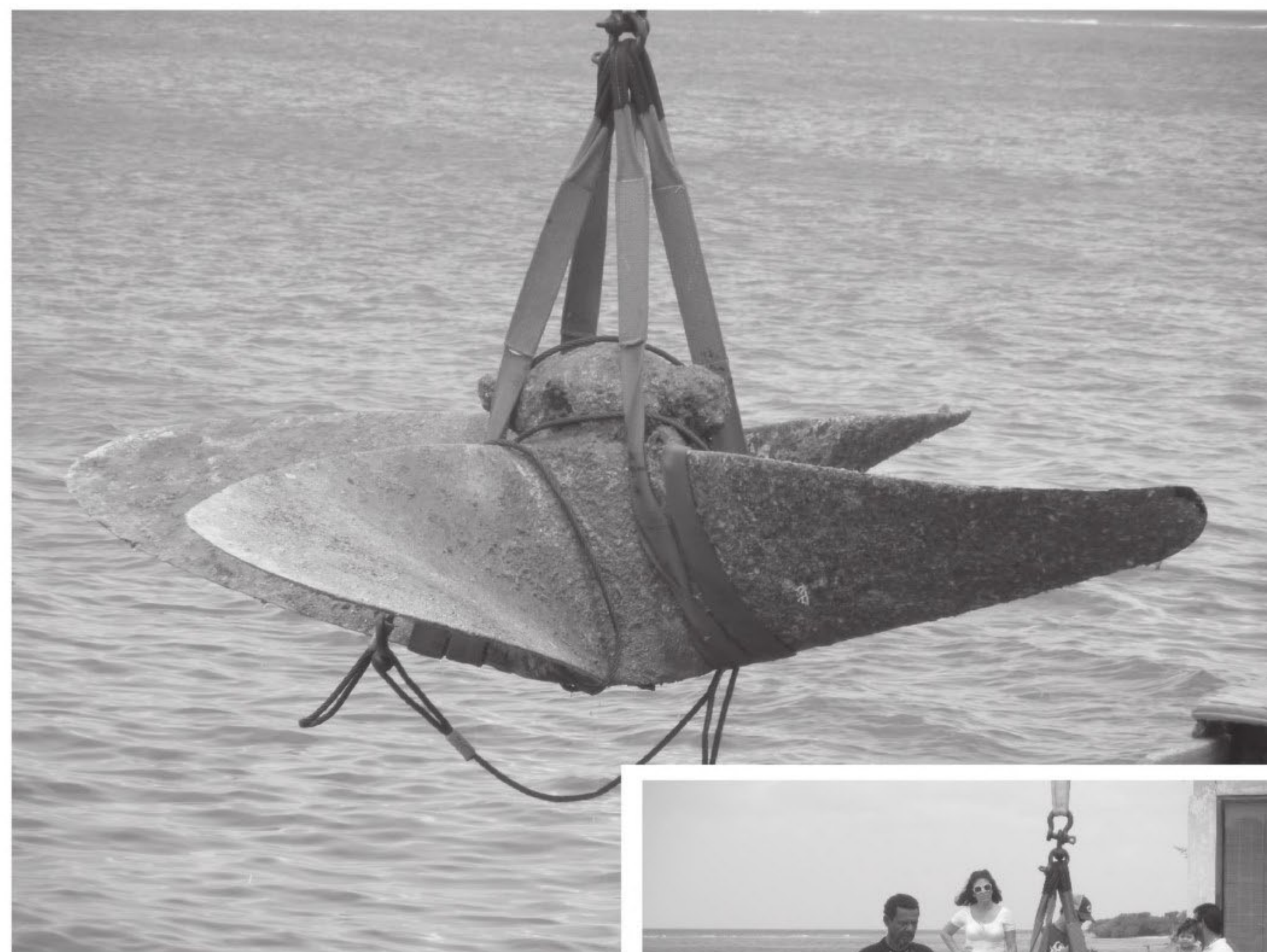
I can still hear the screams
and the shouts: “Jump.
Jump”

The taste of the black
willowing smoke is in my
mouth

My eyes are burning
The once so peaceful
surroundings turn into an
inferno

“Feuer, feuer” the captain of
the German U 156 submarine
commanded

With her bow facing the North East Trade winds
the oil tanker SS Oranjestad lies at anchor
The distance lights of the oil refinery reflecting in the
water



The sound is deafening as the torpedo penetrates her flank
The SS Oranjestad is hurt
But she is keeping her bow with pride high above water
There is a second torpedo
The SS Oranjestad is crippled
She is leaning on her side and is sinking

The brave men aboard fight the enormous odds to keep her afloat
Some men are blasted over board
Others with their clothes on fire, jump into the murky water
One man makes it to a bunker on the reef
There the silhouette of his burned back is stuck
to the wall as a reminder of sacrifice and pain

Today we honor and pay tribute to the brave men
of the SS Oranjestad who paid the ultimate price for Aruba
Also with the greatest respect to the brave men who risked their lives
to bring to the surface this piece of Aruban history
we say “Thank You”

“Always forgive but never forget”.